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THE PLACE OF PARTY IN THE POLITICAL SYSTEM.

It is evident even to the careless observer that party fills a large space in the world of politics. In the United States, France, Great Britain, and indeed in all countries where party government is fully established, the citizen receives the larger share of his political education from party, and through party discharges the larger portion of his political duties. But despite its conceded importance in practical politics, very few have as yet turned their attention to the philosophy of party. As a rule even the best of the formal treatises on political science give it little or no consideration. This neglect may be due in some degree to the fact that the establishment of party government is of recent date, and also to the further fact that previous to the establishment of party government, party was regarded not as the servant but as the enemy of the state. It used to be thought of as having no rights in the political household. It led therefore the precarious life of an outlaw. Under governments which rest on force, as well as under governments that base their claims on divine right, there is no room for party. Such governments see in party a denial of their pretensions and an aspirant to their seats. This dislike of party on theoretic grounds was confirmed by its early conduct. Treated as an outlaw it behaved as an outlaw. Conventional morality it set at defiance. It grew up in the atmosphere of irresponsibility. Since its first work was to unsettle and destroy, it arrayed against itself all conservative influences both good and bad ; and this hostility has always stood in the way of the discovery of its functions and the recognition of its services. It is clear that the framers of the Constitution of the United States did not make full allowance

for the fact that the system which they planned would be worked by party ; had they done so they would not have devised so futile an arrangement as the electoral college. [See Bryce : " Hamilton and De Tocqueville. "']

But whatever may be the excuse for past neglect, there can be no good ground for its continuance. We live to-day under party government. We want good government; and the first step towards securing this is to acquaint ourselves with the nature, the capacity and the limitation of our new ruler. But party is by no means identical with government. It is both something more and something less. It is one of a number of factors which taken together constitute the system found in every advanced state by means of which its political life and progress are maintained. But what place does party hold in this system? The first step towards an answer is to obtain a clear conception of the nature of the state and of the several factors which serve as the organs of its activity.

The state, for the sake of which the political system exists, may be defined as a people politically organized ; that is, a people whose classes and individuals form an organic whole in and through which the political wants of each and all are satisfied. No people that lacks this political self-sufficiency can be a state. A community may be so organized that it can satisfy most of the wants which its members feel as citizens, and yet if it must go outside of itself in order to find satisfaction for even one of these, that community is not a state. In this sense—the sense which we employ when we speak of France and Russia as states—neither Canada nor Massachusetts is a state. But political self-sufficiency, although essential to every true state, does not imply isolation. A degree of inter-dependence among states in matters of a non-political nature is not only desirable but indispensable. Without it progress must be slow and inconsiderable. This useful interdependence is partly economic, partly intellectual, and partly moral and spiritual. That it obtain from other peoples their highest goods and that it impart to them its own, is the condition on which alone any people can take a worthy part in promoting civilization. The

traffic in ideas is safe enough unless it becomes one-sided. The habit of receiving and enjoying what others produce without producing and giving what others may enjoy is not less hurtful to a people than to an individual. The "ultimate end" for which each state exists is to contribute as much as possible to the progress of mankind, but its immediate end as well as its absorbing occupation, is to provide for its own development and welfare. [See the chapters on the Ends of the State in Prof. Burgess' "Political Science and Constitutional Law," Vol. I. p. 83.]

The organ through which the state provides for its ordinary wants is government. It will aid in the effort to obtain a true conception of government, to think of it as the agent whom the state commissions to do certain things in certain ways and for as long a time as the state sees fit to continue the commission. It will aid also to separate in idea the agent from the agency: the agent being the person or group of persons who govern, and the agency the post or group of posts which they fill. Government is the creature of the state. Its office is to serve the state. It has no rights as against the state. It is good in proportion to its obedience and in proportion to the efficiency and fidelity with which it provides for the interests committed to its charge.

But how shall the state secure this obedience and fidelity? In the earlier stages of political development the state did not as a rule secure them at all. Government regularly usurped the functions of the state and identified itself with the state. When Louis XIV. asserted that he, the king, was the state, he advanced a claim which accorded with the practice of most governments before his day and for some time afterwards. There had been, it is true, exceptional great rulers who held themselves to be the servants of their people, and there had been exceptional great periods of considerable duration when government was obedient to the state. But these were in the best days of Greece and Rome. Before and afterwards and nearly everywhere government was the master and the state, the people, was the servant or rather the slave. This, however,

did not come by chance. It was the necessary consequence of the fact that the people were then in their political infancy. The governments were guardians who, since there was no court to call them to account, administered the estates of their wards in their own interests. This statement, however, does not apply without qualification to Latin-Christian Europe during mediæval times. Fortunately each people had then not one but three government-guardians, namely, the pope, the emperor or king, and the feudal lord. Each in turn interposed as the champion of the people against the oppression of the other two. The people under the protection and leadership of first one and then another of their masters, learned to understand, to value, and to fight for their rights, and in this way made some advance towards political manhood. How greatly this mediæval division of government contributed to progress may be seen in the political retrogression which followed, when, at the beginning of the modern period, the national king overcame both pope and baron and appropriated to himself the whole or nearly the whole of government. The peoples were at that time still very far from being able to cope with government. They possessed the principle of representative government; but nowhere could they avail themselves of it in resisting the encroachments of the king. In Spain and France the principle itself was disowned and for a long time almost forgotten. In England it remained, but for a considerable period Parliament was excluded from its highest functions, and degraded into an almost passive instrument of royal policy and caprice. The early Tudors oppressed the state; but, because they did this by means of Parliament, England was able to preserve what her neighbors lost, namely, an institution through which in better times the state could win back its freedom and its rightful authority over government. The English, moreover, were the first to outgrow the political immaturity which had made oppression possible during the fifteenth and much of the sixteenth centuries. Amid the fierce conflicts of the Reformation period, and under the tactful though despotic guidance of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth, the

people learned to think for themselves ; and the state, apart from government, came to have a mind and a will of its own. This was one step towards emancipation. The second belongs to the seventeenth century. Stated in its most comprehensive form, the result of the struggle between Parliament and the Stuarts and between Parliament and Cromwell was the overthrow of the theory of the divine right not only of kings but of government, and the establishment of the doctrine of the supremacy of the state over government. This I think is the innermost meaning of the Bill of Rights of 1789. This epoch-marking instrument signifies in the history of the English-speaking peoples the second and greater Restoration; not of the king "to his own," as in 1660, but of the people to their own. The victory won, the question which next arose was, how shall its fruits be secured? By what devices can the state make sure that government will always and fully execute its will?

The oldest and crudest of these is revolution. But this, although frequently useful, and at times indispensable, is always costly. It leaves behind a demoralization and exhaustion, from which the state recovers slowly and imperfectly. Revolution, moreover, can never be more than a partial remedy for the evil under consideration. Indeed its greatest service is to enable the state to regain for a short period its lost mastery over government, and while in possession of this to make those changes in the form and personnel of government which promise greater efficiency and more perfect obedience. But such changes are experiments ; and there is usually much in the situation which works against their success. In the case of many, perhaps of most revolutions, the governments which they set up prove not less despotic than those which they overthrow.

The constituent convention—the agency through which the state acts in the formal reconstruction of government—is most frequently resorted to in those crises when an impending revolution is to be averted, or when, in consequence of revolution, government is to be constituted anew. Employed in this way,

the constituent convention is one of the most impressive and useful of the means at the command of the state, for asserting its rights and enforcing its will. But it is open to the same objections which apply to revolutions ; indeed it is itself a revolution. It does not, and cannot, secure for the state the continuance of that control over government which in its name and for a moment it strongly asserts.

Another device also of ancient date, by which the state seeks to hold government in due subordination to itself, is a constitution. This, defined in simple terms, is a body of rules by which the state constitutes government and attempts to regulate its conduct. It is obvious, however, that these rules, whether accepted slowly, one by one, as custom gives them form and authority, or all at once when promulgated by a constituent convention, can never adequately express the will of the state. They can only tell what that will is in respect to the general direction of public policy. Particulars they cannot touch. Not only in respect to ordinary legislation and administration, but also in respect to the extraordinary measures which emergencies call for, a constitution, however comprehensive, and however careful in the matter of detail it may be, must still leave a very large field to the discretion of government, so that it becomes possible for government, while observing scrupulously the formal requirements of the constitution, to pursue a policy in many points contrary to the will, and hurtful to the interests of the state. And this can happen all the more easily, because in progressive states the development of the constitution cannot keep even pace with the development of the people. As a rule, stongly conservative interests associate themselves with established constitutional forms and resist for a long time and with success useful as well as injurious changes. Moreover, constitutions are not self-executing. Behind them there is need of a force separate from and independent of themselves in order to carry their provisions into effect.

In some states the government may at will resolve itself into a constituent convention to the extent at least of making im-

portant changes in the constitution. This is true of England, France, and Germany. The result is to greatly strengthen government and to increase correspondingly the risk of encroachment upon the prerogatives of the state. Such states therefore stand in special need of some primary form of organization by which they can hold their governments in subjection.

The most effective of the several devices for accomplishing this end is party. Slowly and clumsily it was fashioned during the quarrels between Cavalier and Roundhead. Awkwardly it began to claim and to fill its place under the later Stuarts and William III. But during the reigns of the first and second Georges, it came to be so well established that it could withstand the reaction led by George III. The American colonies received the institution of party, as they did most of their political outfit, from the mother country. But in their hands it underwent after the formation of the Union a marked development, and to-day the American party-system presents a perfection of organization not elsewhere to be found.

How does party accomplish this task of holding government in subjection to the state? Its more obvious functions are two ; it educates and organizes public opinion, and it administers the government. Public opinion is what the people think and feel in respect to public questions ; not what they think and feel when such questions are first presented ; but their well-considered thought and their clarified feeling after they have studied these questions well, and have attained the mood which is favorable to wise judgment. Party is by far the most important of the agencies through which the crude first thoughts and blind first feelings of the people are transformed into the rational thinking and feeling which is public opinion. In the first place, party keeps the people fully informed in regard to public matters. What one party fails to discover or wishes to conceal, its rival is sure to unearth and proclaim. In the second place, party discusses with freedom and thoroughness every public question in the presence of the people. In the third place, party discusses such questions not merely on the ground of a surface expediency but in the light of great princi-

ples. Indeed the ultimate end of party is to secure as the basis of public policy the adoption of the principles which it professes. The dissemination of these principles is therefore one of its chief employments, and enters largely into the discussions which it conducts. But the principles of the different parties considered collectively are the principles of the people. Despite the many objectionable features which mark the contests of parties, such as narrowness, exaggeration, and downright misrepresentation, the results of these contests is to bring the people closer to the fundamental truths of politics, and to make them sounder as well as better informed judges of what concerns the public welfare. In the fourth place, party not only secures the discussion of public questions before the people, but, what is more important, discussion by the people. In this way party lifts the common citizen out of the ranks of private life and imparts to him in some degree a public character. Lastly, party organizes the public opinion which it helps to form. It provides the means by which those who hold like views in regard to public questions can act together effectively in their support. It is able to do this because it possesses and exercises the right to designate those who fill the posts of government ; and because, in the second place, it must take into its own hands the direction of every movement by which the constitution is modified. The second of the two functions named is to administer the government. In the performance of this function the party in power under the system of party government, holds the position and does the work which fall to the king under a system which is really—not nominally as in England—monarchical. In the discharge of this function the duty of the party in power as well as of the king is to apply in the wisest possible way the public resources to the satisfaction of the public wants, and to do this according to the methods and with strict regard to the limitations prescribed by the constitution. It is not necessary to discuss here the debatable question whether party government in itself is a good form of government. It will suffice to direct attention to one remarkable difference between it and other forms of government.

The party in power, in other words the government, is removable at will. In England this can be done at any moment when Parliament is in session; in the United States it can be done at least once in every four years. Moreover, in all countries where party-government exists, the state is constantly checking, rebuking, or encouraging the party in power; and the party in power, that is the government, listens respectfully and obediently to every manifestation of its master's will. That this is not true under other forms of government is sufficiently obvious. States which are ruled by monarchs or oligarchies are usually forced to resort to revolution whenever it becomes necessary to depose the agent who governs.

To what place in the political system do these functions entitle party? The answer to this question is that party, or rather the party system, constitutes an informal but real and powerful primary organization of the state. Party stands closer to the state than any other factor of the political system. It is the first to interpret, and the first to give expression to the will of the state. And when that will is once made manifest party superintends its execution. If the state wills a change in the constitution, party puts in motion the constitutional machinery by which the change is effected. If the state wills a change in the policy of government, party takes the steps by which this, too, is accomplished. In short, it seems to me, that the obedience of government which the state used to secure at long intervals and for short periods, at great cost and very imperfectly by means of revolution and constituent assemblies, it now secures easily and far more durably and perfectly by means of party.

ANSON D. MORSE.

Amherst College.